

THE ADVENT OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY AFTER HIJRA

**by
MAULANA DOST MUHAMMAD SHAHID**

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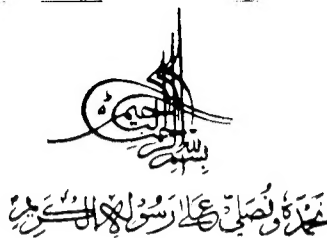
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Foreword

The advent of the fifteenth century of the Hijra discloses the house of Islam in complete disarray. Iraq and Iran are busy in destroying each other's resources. In this suicidal conflict Iran has the sympathy and support of Syria and Libya, and Iraq those of Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Syria and Jordan are on the brink of armed conflict. Anwar Sadat's courageous and realistic design to curb the expansionist tendencies of Israel has only succeeded in earning him the hostility of the rest of the Arab world. Algeria and Morocco are at odds with each other over the Western Sahara. The valiant patriots of Afghanistan are waging a desperate struggle to release themselves from the strangulating hug of their northern neighbour. The situation in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to the security and integrity of Pakistan. The internal condition of Pakistan is far from satisfactory. The security of more than sixty million Muslims of India is constantly imperilled by the aggressive attitude of the bigoted section of the majority community. The condition of Bangla Desh verges on bankruptcy. The largest Muslim state, Indonesia, despite its vast resources, can scarcely be described as presenting an attractive picture of an ideal Islamic state.

In the last quarter of the fourteenth century of the Hijra a large number of Muslim states have been bestowed by divine grace a large accession of material wealth; though wealth abounds there is a dearth of righteousness. The world of Islam appears to be afflicted with a spiritual malaise, which calls for a spiritual remedy. Where is the remedy to be found? This booklet examines this remedy.

SHEIKH MUBARAK AHMAD,
Imam of the London Mosque

The Advent of the Fifteenth Century after Hijra

Reflection over Chapter 9 verses 30 and 31 of the Holy Quran reveals that at one time the mischief of the Jews and the Christians would be intensified and their propaganda against Islam would assume a new aspect. The succeeding verse runs as follows:

They will seek to extinguish the light of Allah by blowing through their mouths, but Allah will utterly reject everything except the perfection of His light, even though the disbelievers may resent it (9:32).

This verse clearly indicates that their propaganda against Islam would be carried on mainly verbally, through speeches, writings, pamphlets, book and literature. But all their efforts would be frustrated by counterblasts that would be inspired by the spiritual power of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. This is proclaimed in verse 33, which runs as follows:

He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the True religion, that He may make it prevail over every other religion, even though those who associate partners with Allah may resent it.

It has been common ground among Muslims of all persuasions that the triumph of Islam over other religions in the latter days would be achieved through the Mahdi, who would appear in the beginning of the fourteenth century of the Hegira. With the decline of moral and spiritual standards among the Muslims, many of their divines lost heart and being themselves bereft of the deeper knowledge of the Holy Quran and its high and profound philosophy, began to give currency to the utterly false and defeatist notion that the triumph of Islam over other religions would be brought about by the use of force by the Mahdi. This notion is not only revolting and repugnant to reason and good sense, it is directly contradictory to the express and mandatory pronouncement of the Holy Quran:

There shall be no compulsion in religion, for guidance and error have been clearly distinguished (2:257).

Indeed, no faith, doctrine or philosophy can be deemed to be based on truth which seeks acceptance through force.

The Mahdi was to establish the superiority of Islam through a detailed and reasoned exposition of the philosophy of Islam enshrined in the Holy Quran. His mind would be illumined by divine revelation, he would be inspired by the grace of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, with whom he would be so perfectly identified spiritually as had been expressed by the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, in his pronouncement: He will be buried along with me in my grave. Thus his advent would be a second spiritual advent of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, as is indicated in the Holy Quran (62:4).

The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, clearly indicated the time of the advent of the Mahdi, in a manner that cannot be gainsaid. He announced:

‘There are two signs of our Mahdi which have never been manifested for any claimant since the creation of heaven and earth. They are that the moon will be eclipsed in the month of Ramadhan on the first of the nights appointed for its eclipse, and that the sun will be eclipsed in the same month of Ramadhan on the middle one of the days appointed for its eclipse’ (*Sunan Dar Qutni*, Vol. I, p.188).

This meant that the advent of *the* Mahdi, designated by the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, as *our* Mahdi, would be marked by the eclipse of the moon in the month of Ramadhan on its thirteenth night, and by the eclipse of the sun in the same month of Ramadhan fifteen days later, as the lunar eclipse occurs on the 13th, 14th or 15th night of the moon and the solar eclipse occurs on one of the last three days of the lunar month. This particular phenomenon manifested itself in the eastern hemisphere in respect of the moon on 21st March, and in respect of the sun on 6th April, 1894, and was repeated in the western hemisphere in 1895.

This manifestation calls for serious reflection. In one aspect it was a manifestation which was determined by the law governing the movement of the planets, and there was no room in it for human intervention; yet in another aspect it was a grand sign in support of the truth of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. He could not have known or guessed that such a manifestation would take place 1360 years after his death. Even if such a manifestation had occurred just by itself, its prediction thirteen

and a half centuries earlier would have been conclusive proof of the truth of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. But it did not stand alone. It had another splendid and glorious aspect.

Its occurrence was to serve as a warning that *the* Mahdi had appeared and that those who were awaiting his advent should seek him, accept him and obey him so that they might thus participate in the glorious revival of Islam which God had decreed would be achieved through that devoted servant of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, the Mahdi, and his followers. If despite this manifestation it was found that the Mahdi had not appeared, the truth of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, would have been questioned by the opponents of Islam and the Holy Prophet. But if it was found that *before* this manifestation a devoted servant of the the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, who had led a pure and blameless life in accord with the teachings of Islam, and who was a constant recipient of divine revelation, had, under divine command, proclaimed that he was the Mahdi, the manifestation would be hailed as a conclusive and glorious confirmation of the truth of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, of such a claimant and of Islam.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (India), who was born on 20th February, 1835, and died on 26th May, 1908, began to receive divine revelation around 1876, and continued to receive it with greater and greater frequency throughout the rest of his life. Between 1878–82 he wrote his epoch-making book *Braheen Ahmadiyyah* in which he demonstrated completely the superiority of Islam over other faiths in such a manner that he was unanimously acclaimed by the leading contemporary Muslim divines of India as the greatest champion of Islam.

For instance, Maulvi Muhammad Husain of Batala, leader of the Ahli Hadees sect, published in his journal *Ishaatus Sunnah* (Vol. VII, Nos 6–11) a detailed review of the book, in the opening part of which he observed:

‘The author of *Braheen Ahmadiyyah*, according to the testimony of friends and foes, regulates his life according to the law of Islam and is a pious and truthful person. In our opinion, keeping in mind the age and its circumstances, this is a book the equal of which has not been published in Islam to this day, whatever may happen hereafter. The author has proved himself so steadfast in the service of Islam in every respect, that few such instances are to be found among the

Muslims. If anyone should be disposed to consider our language an instance of Asiatic exaggeration, he should point out at least one book which refutes the opponents of Islam so forcefully and emphatically, and should name three or four such helpers of Islam who are determined to serve Islam with all they have and who have challenged the opponents of Islam and those who deny the possibility of revelation to come and satisfy themselves that the challenger is himself a recipient of revelation. It is well-known that Satanic suggestions are mostly false, but not one of the revelations received by the author of *Braheen Ahmadiyyah* has been proved false up to this day. Can any Muslim follower of the Quran believe that Satan can be given knowledge, like the prophets and angels, of that which is hidden so that not one of the disclosures of the hidden should lack truth?'

He concluded with:

'The author of *Braheen Ahmadiyyah* has, by writing this book, safeguarded the honour of the Muslims and has challenged the opponents of Islam forcefully and emphatically. He has announced to the whole world that anyone who doubts the truth of Islam should come to him and should witness its intellectual and spiritual proofs based on the Quran, and the miraculous manifestations of the prophethood of Muhammad, peace be upon him.'

A saintly Sufi, Hazrat Ahmad Jan of Ludhiana, wrote:

'That great personage, benefactor of mankind, source of benevolence and beneficence, personal proof of Islam, honoured above the commonalty and the nobility, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, may his blessings endure, Chief of Qadian, has written a book designated *Braheen Ahmadiyyah* in Urdu. This book establishes the truth of Islam and of the Prophethood of Muhammad, peace be upon him, and of the Holy Quran, through three hundred strong proofs of various types and refutes all religions opposed to Islam by convincing reasoning. The verses of the Holy Quran that are cited on their appropriate occasions in this book amount to two-thirds of the whole Quran. In this fourteenth century of Islam great confusion prevails among the followers of every religion. At this time a book was needed like the *Braheen Ahmadiyyah* and a Reformer was needed like Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who is ready to prove the claims of Islam to the satisfaction of its opponents.

He added:

'The author of *Braheen Ahmadiyyah* is not one of the common run of divines and spiritual preceptors, but has been specially com-

missioned by God and is a recipient of revelation. Hundreds of revelations, prophecies, true dreams, divine directions, glad tidings and intimations of triumph and divine help and divine guidance, couched in various languages, have been set out in this book, supported by the testimony of hundreds of opponents of Islam which establishes their truth and proves that the author has doubtlessly written this book under divine direction. It is also clear that, according to the Hadith of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, that Allah, Lord of Glory and Honour, would raise among the Muslims, at the beginning of every century, one who would revive the faith, the author of this book is the Reformer of the Fourteenth Century and is a profound scholar and is one of the most perfect individuals of the Muslim Community. This is also supported by another Hadith of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, wherein he is reported to have said: 'The true divine among my followers will be like the Prophets of Israel' (*Taasurate Qadian*, pp.66-8).

Maulvi Muhammad Sharif, of Bangalore, South India, wrote in his paper *Manshoor Muhammadi*:

'This book, *Braheen Ahmadiyyah*, is a peerless publication in its proof of the truth of the Quran and of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet. The author has proved the truth of Islam by such positive arguments that every just person would acknowledge that the Quran is the Book of Allah, that the prophethood of the Holy Prophet is righteous, that Islam is a faith established by God and that a Muslim is instructed in the truth. There is here such a multiplicity of proofs that no way of escape and no possibility of denial has been left open to an opponent. Every argument is clear, every proof is bright. The book is a mirror of faith and is full of the Quran to the brim. It leads to the straight path, it is a torch that lights up the true way. It is a treasury of truth, it is a mine of guidance, it acts like lightning on the stores of the enemy and burns up all his arguments. For the Muslims it is a strong support for the Holy Book and is a bright proof of the Mother of the Book. It has unsettled and disturbed every enemy of religion.'

In March 1889 Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad initiated the Ahmadiyyah Movement in Islam.

In 1890 he wrote three books, *Fatah-i-Islam*, *Tauzeeh Maram* and *Izalah-i-Auham*. All three were published in the early part of 1891. In these books he set forth, under divine direction, his claim of being the Mahdi and Promised Messiah, whose advent in the latter days had been foretold by the Holy Prophet, peace

be upon him (see Ibn Majah, Ch. Sharrataz Zaman; Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal, Vol. II; Bukhari, Ch. Advent of the Messiah). This claim aroused bitter opposition and the Muslim divines, led by Maulvi Muhammad Husain of Batala, who had been a great admirer and enthusiastic supporter of his, almost unanimously denounced him as an infidel, outside the pale of Islam. They hurled vile abuse at him, proclaimed him an apostate from Islam, and some of them went so far as to declare that his assassination would be a highly meritorious act and that whoever accomplished it would be straightaway admitted to paradise.

As has been mentioned, the two signs of the advent of *the* Mahdi which had been proclaimed by the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, were clearly manifested a little more than three years after Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad announced his claim of being the Mahdi, which was a clear proof of the truth of his claim. It is noteworthy that the fourteenth century has passed away without any one beside Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claiming to be *the* Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. His rejection, therefore, would amount to the rejection of a grand prophecy of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, and would furnish the opponents of Islam with an excuse to question the truth of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, which must be avoided.

The two signs announced by the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, are not, however, the only conclusive proof of the truth of the claim of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. There are many others, too numerous to be set out in a brief statement like this one. Mention may be made of one or two fundamental ones.

The crucial question is that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad affirmed that from his fortieth year he had been a constant recipient of divine revelation. If this affirmation of his was true, it must necessarily follow that all his claims based on divine revelation, or derived from it, were true and must be accepted. If his affirmation was false, he was an impostor and must be condemned as such.

One criterion that the Holy Quran has laid down for determining the truth or falsehood of a claimant of the receipt of revelation is expressed as follows:

Say to them: Had Allah so willed, I would not have recited it (the Quran) to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I have

spent a whole life-time among you before this, will you not then understand? (10:17)

The attention of the disbelievers is here drawn to the utter purity of the Holy Prophet's life even before the divine call came to him, so as to impress upon them that he who had throughout led a righteous life would not suddenly, on arriving at full maturity, start fabricating lies against God.

In the case of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also, in the revelation vouchsafed to him, God Almighty invited attention to the purity of his life from the very beginning as proof of the truth of his claim, in the same words as had been employed in the Holy Quran with reference to the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, namely: *I have spent a whole life-time among you before this, will you not then understand?* (*Nazoolul Masih*, p.212). He himself invited attention to the purity of his life in the following words:

'You cannot point to any fault, imposture, falsehood or deceit in my previous life so that you could say that one who was already given to falsehood and imposture had only added to his previous falsehoods another imposture. Which of you can criticise anything in my previous life? It is the grace of God that from the very beginning He established my life along the lines of righteousness. This is a proof for those who reflect' (*Tadhkaratush Shahadatin*, p.62).

Throughout his life no one ever charged him with uttering a falsehood. It is not to be imagined, therefore, that one who was so wholly committed to the truth in all aspects of his life would be guilty of the heinous falsehood that God spoke to him, if in fact He did not.

All Muslims believe firmly that according to the Holy Quran a person who fabricates something himself and attributes it to God cannot flourish at all and is bound to be frustrated and ruined by God. This doctrine is based upon the following verses of the Holy Quran:

Had he (Muhammad) fabricated any saying and attributed it to Us, We would surely have seized him by the right hand and then surely We would have severed his large artery; and not one of you could have hindered Us (69:45-8).

This is an awesome warning to every daring impostor. A person, wholly misguided or out of his mind, might claim that he

is God and may suffer no visible harm. The divine mercy may be pleased to overlook his aberration, inasmuch as such a claim is not likely to mislead or confuse any sensible person. The case is entirely different where a person claims to be the recipient of divine revelation. If his claim is false and he persists in it deliberately, he might become the cause of the error and misguidance of a large number of people. God Almighty has, therefore, set forth in these verses His firm and clear warning that an impostor would not escape His wrath and His chastisement.

Since the time of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, there have appeared many false claimants of the receipt of divine revelation and in no single instance has any of them escaped the doom that is pronounced in these verses. In every case divine judgment has overtaken the offender and he has been visibly ruined.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was the constant recipient of divine revelation over a period well beyond thirty years. The revelation vouchsafed to him carried within itself numberless proofs of its genuineness and truth. It was replete with grand prophecies, spiritual insights, knowledge of things divine hidden and overt, glad tidings and warnings for friend and foe and spiritual guidance at the highest level.

His life was exposed to every hazard. He had been condemned as an infidel, an apostate from Islam. Leading Muslim divines had declared that his assassination would be a highly meritorious act and that whoever compassed his death would thereby prove himself worthy of paradise. Yet not only did he enjoy complete immunity from divine chastisement, which is appointed as the portion of an impostor, he marched from triumph to triumph all through his life and was obviously one who was greatly favoured by God within the meaning of the final verse of Surah Fatihah. Far from being exposed to divine wrath for his alleged daring impostures, as was imagined and alleged by his opponents, he had been bestowed a divine guarantee of security (*Tadhkirah*, p.149) in the same words in which the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, had been guaranteed security, namely: *Allah will safeguard thee against harm by people* (5:68); a guarantee that was as completely fulfilled in his case as it had been fulfilled in the case of his revered master the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. Not only was his physical security fully

safeguarded, he was also completely safeguarded in respect of his freedom, dignity and honour. False charges were brought against him and he was hauled into court to answer them. In every case he was honourably discharged or acquitted and all the malicious designs of his enemies were completely frustrated. In one of those cases he was charged with so grave an offence as conspiracy to murder. Yet the proceedings took a course in which his honour, dignity and innocence were so completely upheld and vindicated that not only were his opponents utterly frustrated in their evil designs, but suffered great humiliation and were exposed to prosecution in respect of the false charge they had made. But he declared that his case was pending before God Almighty and that he would not initiate proceedings against his enemies in a court of law.

The Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, had said that in his second advent the Messiah would defend Islam, break the cross and kill swine (Abu Daud, Book *Al-Malaham*, Ch. Khurujud-dajjal). This prophecy of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, was fulfilled in a striking manner by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who was designated by God in one of the revelations vouchsafed to him as the Champion of Allah in the mantles of the prophets (*Tadhkirah*, p.148). His outstanding defence of Islam is acknowledged even by his opponents. He effectively exposed the falsity of the Christian affirmation that Jesus had died upon the cross and thus destroyed the entire basis of the doctrines of the Atonement, Resurrection and physical ascension to heaven. Under divine direction he was able to demonstrate that having been delivered from the cross, and having met his disciples several times in his physical body, he parted from them and travelled through the countries in which the so-called tribes of Israel were scattered after the Babylonian captivity and eventually settled in Kashmir where he died and was buried in Khanyar, a suburb of Srinagar. He set all this out in his book *Masih Hindustan Mein (Jesus In India)*. Since the publication of that book, the Tomb of Jesus in Srinagar has become a shrine and a place of pilgrimage. In consequence of the exposure of the myth of the death of Jesus upon the cross by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus is being described as a myth by some dignitaries of the Church. The cross has been effectively broken.

By establishing a community whose motto is '*I shall prefer Faith over every Wordly Concern*', Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad declared war upon every type of vice and impurity. That was the metaphorical killing of swine. He himself led a wholly blameless, pure and beneficent life, which followed in the minutest detail the pattern that had been established by the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. He founded a community, the members of which are required to illustrate in their daily lives all the social, moral and spiritual values inculcated by Islam, of which the highest example was furnished in the life of the Holy Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him. They are drawn from every walk of life and are practical men pursuing the whole range of beneficent activities according to the teachings of Islam.

They do not reject the normal values of life and have set enviable examples of full, successful and highly beneficent lives. The distinguishing feature of their lives is the upholding of the moral and the spiritual above the material and the physical in a pattern of beneficent co-ordination. As taught by Islam, they believe that the faculties and capacities bestowed upon man by God Almighty are a precious bounty and must be beneficently developed and exercised at their proper time and occasion and are not to be suppressed or stultified. The moral and spiritual code to which they seek to conform imposes no handicap upon them. There have, by the grace and mercy of God, appeared among them, persons possessing high eminence in almost every sphere of human life.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had been bestowed by divine favour vast and deep knowledge and understanding of the Holy Quran, miraculous proficiency in the Arabic language and an extraordinary insight into divine secrets with which, according to the Holy Quran, only divine Messengers are favoured (72:27). In his book *Minanur Rahman* he developed his thesis that Arabic was the mother of tongues, which came as a happy surprise even to eminent Arab lexicographers. However, he claimed nothing on his own. He stressed repeatedly that every favour that had been bestowed upon him was bestowed by virtue of the spiritual grace of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, to whom he was passionately and whole-heartedly devoted. He gave expression to his all-consuming love for the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, in heart-moving prose and verse in Arabic, Persian and Urdu.

His love for and devotion to the Holy Quran were matched only by his overpowering love for and utter devotion to the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. He warned that the pattern of human life was about to be profoundly affected in vital aspects, and that he had been raised to set forth, under divine guidance, *from the Holy Quran*, the guidance and the philosophy that mankind would need in the epoch that was approaching and thus to establish the supremacy of Islam over all other faiths which had been foretold in the Holy Quran (9:33). Some concept of the magnitude of the service that he performed in that behalf may be formed by a perusal of the English rendering of his paper entitled *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, which was read at the Conference of Great Religions held in Lahore in the last week of December 1896.

In conclusion, attention may be drawn, by way of illustration, to the striking manner in which one of the early revelations vouchsafed to him has been and continues to be fulfilled. He belonged to Qadian, a small town in the most backward province of India, eleven miles from the nearest telegraph office and railway station and thirty-five miles from the nearest city in which a printing press was available. In this situation, when he was little known and lacked all worldly resources, the divine call came to him that he must gird himself to the service of Islam, so as to demonstrate its superiority to all other faiths, and he was comforted with the divine assurance: *I shall carry thy message to the ends of the earth* (*Tadhkirah*, p.184). In the estimation of the worldly this sounded as a lunatic's boast. It is true that from the very first some of the righteous minded responded to his call and despite ridicule and all manner of persecution, set a high and enviable example of firmness of faith, loyalty, devotion and purity of life; but progress was slow, and by the time of his death in 1908, his community numbered not more than half a million and his message had scarcely been carried beyond India. Even so, having regard to the bitter opposition that it encountered and the severe persecution to which the small, but devoted, band of his followers was exposed, his enemies had been seriously perturbed at their daily growing numbers. They breathed a sigh of relief at his death, that what they had esteemed a grave heresy would now suffer its natural death and they need take no more account of it. But kindly observe what happened. The Ahmadiyya

Movement in Islam was initiated in 1889. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahamd announced his claim of being the Mahdi and Promised Messiah in early 1891. At the time of his death the number of his followers did not exceed half a million, and few of them lived outside India.

Today, no more than a little over seventy-two years after his death, the membership of the Movement exceeds ten million, and is growing in geometrical progression. Its branches are strung around the globe in all the continents. It is accounted the most dynamic missionary Movement in Islam. Its members have set a unique example of upholding moral and spiritual values of Islam. This is not the doing of man; it is a manifestation of the grace of Allah, the Supreme.

Its opponents have nothing to offer but confusing and outworn niceties of doctrine. They are wedded to the letter that killeth, and are bereft of the spirit of righteousness that alone revives and bestows life. That spirit can be kindled and fostered only by Allah's grace, which may be won through steadfastness and prayer, as the Holy Quran directs (2:46).

The basic cause of the malaise that afflicts the Muslims is their turning away from Allah, and their pursuit of self-devised remedies. The true and effective remedy is that they must turn to Allah and hold fast to Him and follow in every respect His design rather than their own devices.

May Allah, of His mercy and grace, enable us to embrace humbly and sincerely the guidance that He has provided for us so that we may become His instruments for the consummation of the glorious supremacy of Islam. Amen.